

# VOCALIZING FOR HEALTH AND SUCCESS

Drawings by Rodney Thomson

By UMBERTO SORRENTINO

If one wishes to sell goods, teach school, make political speeches, become an efficient truant officer, influence a board of directors, or frighten away nocturnal feline serenaders, he or she should have a voice "with a punch." A voice that expresses a personality. Lacking this, one will constantly labor under a disadvantage, an inability to "get it over."

The salesman who has a timid, retreating voice, who falteringly speaks from his throat, is foredoomed to failure. A section boss who lacked a robust, "carrying" voice would be a joke. A telephone operator who enunciated poorly, who mumbled her words, would be a nuisance. And a singer who neglected to apply her technique of voice production to the selection she was interpreting would be absurd.

A well placed, resonant voice is the chief essential of a magnetic personality. It is the wireless communication of the inner mind. It sets up sympathetic vibrations in all with whom we may have relations.

Therefore, a course in singing—or, rather, in proper breathing and voice placing—should be an indispensable part of the education of every man and woman who hopes to succeed in the social, professional, or business world. It is of infinitely greater importance than is a knowledge of mathematics, the classics, or the purely technical subjects that consume over half our schooltime. A man's position in life, and his power to maintain that position, depend largely upon his ability to establish friendships and inspire conviction in superiors or subordinates.

Now a fair voice can be made from a bad voice, and from a very ordinary voice, by practice and application, a good voice can be developed. The first essential to securing and maintaining a good voice in either a singer or a speaker is good health. Unless one possesses a sound physique, with diaphragm under perfect control,

one of our greatest preventives of tuberculosis. For the delicate, narrow-chested boy or girl a course in singing is a veritable health insurance. We say singing, because there is a pleasurable motive connected with the breathing exercises of a vocal lesson, which otherwise might be lacking—if breathing for breathing's sake alone was practised.

**P**ROFESSIONAL men in all walks of life are taking up the matter of proper breathing in connection with efficiency in their work. To a lawyer or a preacher it has long been recognized that this training is absolutely indispensable. In fact, many famous lawyers and dramatic actors, before making a plea or giving a performance requiring exceptional vocal effort, sit at the piano, and go through a series of voice exercises just as would a singer.

During the recent medical congress in London a number of physicians who read papers or delivered addresses before this meeting, particularly the throat and lung specialists, breathed and "placed" their voices with the precision of a Melba or a Titta Ruffo. This is highly significant, as it points to a gradually growing recognition among professional men of the great value of vocal training.

Next in importance to good health, and intimately connected with it in developing a voice or a successful business career, is nerve control. Nervousness is the bane of a singer or speaker, the black demon that grimmaces at him from every corner of the darkened auditorium, and freezes him into a panic. Where it is not due to actual nerve starvation, in which condition a long period of rest or forced feeling with phosphates might be required, nervousness is due to attempting too much, or to lack of confidence in one's ability.

In the former case—as, for instance, a man asking for an increase in salary—he may attempt too many reasons and explanations as to why he thinks he is entitled to more pay. Before he arrives at the crux of his argument, the cold, clammy stare of his employer may "scare him stiff." In attempting to say too much, he has said nothing.

The cure for this is to say the most important thing first, or else materially to condense the argument. Then breathe deeply; for a man with his lungs full of air is better poised; his courage is at high tide. Unconsciously he feels the exhilarance of oxygen stimulation, the heart beats more strongly, the blood circulates more freely. The carbon monoxid in the lungs and in the blood, which exerts a depressive effect upon the nervous system, is neutralized by the inhaled oxygen. So much for the physical or physiological effects of deep breathing.

But hardly less important is its psychological effect. When you stop to take a deep breath before answering a question or propounding one, your brain has a momentary opportunity to work, and your thoughts to focus. Consequently, when you speak, you speak in confidence. Your voice has a "punch" back of it.

Mr. Roosevelt said, "When you are right, shout it." Frequently the very vigor of presentation carries conviction. Take, for example, the Germans. They are invariably loud voiced. A discourse of Germans holding a friendly little argument sounds like a riot. But they are among the most successful and aggressive business men in the world. Their enterprises are to be found on every part of the globe, their channels of commerce ramify almost every civilized and uncivilized country.

On the contrary, the Spaniard, who is exceptionally soft voiced, since he discarded piracy as a profession, is one of the poorest and most unsuccessful of business men.

It has also been demonstrated that stammering is a form of nervousness, that it originates in the brain; for if the stammerer forgets himself consciousness and timidity—as under the influence of hypnosis, a partial anesthetic, during sleep, or because of some overpowering emotion—he forgets to stammer. In fact, most "cures" for stammering consist



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in breathing exercises and suggestion tending to overcome nervousness. Stammerers and neurasthenics almost invariably take short, spasmodic breaths. Ergo, to help overcome stammering and nervousness, take long, deep breaths.

Nervousness may change the "color" of the singing or speaking voice. While the tone might normally be light,—as a tenor or high barytone,—extreme nervous tension will "darken" it, make it "beefy" and colorless. It may temporarily change a tenor to a barytone register, or a barytone to a basso.

Also that form of nervous excitement that we term "fear" has a tendency to make the voice strident and sharp. Sometimes its effects are so marked as to cause temporary loss of the voice. Only last winter, in America, a great artist, on the evening of his debut, became absolutely paralyzed by the nervous tension under which he was laboring. Happily, his confidence in himself was restored by the sympathy of the audience and his kindly treatment by the press; so he redeemed himself gloriously on his next appearance, and has since become a prime favorite.

The presence of a burglar in her room will frequently cause an attack of dumbness in a woman who has imperative need for all her vocal resources. More often, however, she gets a chance to give the burglar and the neighbors a sample of her power of voice before fear grips her. This automatic tendency to scream on the part of a woman explains why the average burglar would rather encounter two men than one little, weak woman—with a strong voice.

**T**HE next important thing for a singer or speaker to cultivate is "carrying" power, what the Italian teachers term "metallo" or "squillo." This is the quality that gives the tone its "bing," and without which the finest voice is useless for singing or oratorical purposes. Fortunately this is a quality that can be cultivated, which lies within the power of everyone who has the patience to practise and the will to persevere.

"Metallo" is that quality of tone which is obtained by "putting the tone in the mask," or "placing the tone forward," so that instead of talking "in his chest" or throat, one talks on his teeth and the bones of the nose. This quality and method should not be confused with the unpleasant nasal tone characteristic of the Yankee or the Frenchman. These focus on the nose alone, neglecting to throw the sound against the teeth and palatal arch, which produces a voice that is extremely disagreeable to musical ears.

The successful singer or speaker eats his own voice. He has the tone so close to the teeth that he could chew it, were it material. The way to acquire this vocal command is to hold the head in a natural, relaxed position, slightly lowered, so as to remove all tension from the muscles of the neck. Then, with a full, deep breath, under control of the diaphragm, articulate the vowel A explosively, simultaneously assuming a smiling expression. The teeth should be about an inch apart, and partly uncovered by the lips.

Practise this vowel, throwing it right against the front teeth by combining it with a long-drawn-out L; thus, "L-A," retaining the

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"Many famous lawyers take vocal exercises as a singer would."



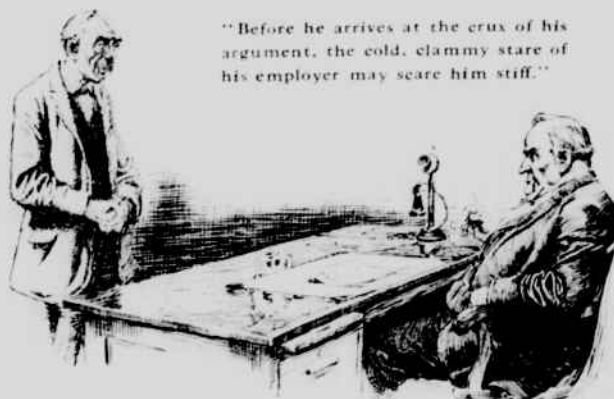
though she has a voice to charm the insensate trees and stones, she may not hope to achieve success. Also a sweet voice—as with a sweet disposition—rarely accompanies a sour stomach. A dyspeptic singer is an anomaly; or, better still, if he remains a dyspeptic, he does not remain a good singer.

An anemic, cadaverous vocalist or speaker will almost invariably have an anemic, sepulchral voice, colorless and insipid. The chief exception to this occurs with the tubercular, who have increased vocal resonance, due to the formation of pathological cavities in their lungs.

Naturally, the respiratory passages should be clear, in order to permit the free emission of the tone, and give the proper degree of vibration to it in its passage from the vocal cords to the ear of the listener. Adenoids, enlarged turbinated bones in the nasal passages, enlarged tonsils, and other abnormal conditions require operation. Inflammation and chronic congestion of the air passages should receive medical attention.

But singing and vocal exercises, in themselves, conduce to good health. The value of deep breathing and breath control, in developing strength in the diaphragm and abdominal muscles, is incalculable. The blood is better purified, because of the larger amount of oxygen inhaled at each inspiration. The abdominal organs are kneaded and massaged by the rhythmic action of the diaphragm forcing them downward, permitting their return to normal position, when the deflation of the lungs relieves downward pressure. This gentle massage stimulates the activities of the liver and the digestive organs; in fact, thousands of bad cases of chronic dyspepsia have been cured by the breathing exercises that are a fundamental part of vocal instruction. The organs concerned in elimination are also aroused to healthy activity.

Deep inflation of the lungs—as everyone knows—is



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